RICE

Teacher EDUCATION

LEARN. TEACH. LEAD.

*Urban Education*
EDUC 335 / 535 – Spring 2014
Thursday 6:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.
Mechanical Laboratory 254

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## COURSE DESCRIPTION

Welcome to this next chapter of your education studies at Rice University, and specifically to our study of Urban Education!

Whether you have personal experiences in an urban educational setting or simply have developed your own perspective based on media and other sources, you are likely to enter this class with some preconceptions about what is and isn't working there. A fuller understanding of urban schools and how they can effectively serve the needs of their students depends not only on these accounts, but also on an appreciation of the overlapping factors in play in these environments. *So how can a new educator fully prepare themselves for success in urban schools, and more importantly how can we as citizens support the efforts of these educators?*

Over the next fifteen weeks, we will engage in a comprehensive examination of these key questions through a combination of in-class discussions, written reflections, simulation exercises, and reading of texts. My aim is to ensure that each of you feels energized and challenged by the ongoing exchange of ideas you will be engaged in with your colleagues, and that you in turn feel confident in your ability to actively contribute to that process.

## COURSE OBJECTIVES/LEARNING OUTCOMES

In order to guide our discussions, this course will be centered around a series of guiding questions. You will know you have mastered the course content when you are able to answer each guiding question in a detailed and thoughtful way. Your final exam will be derived exclusively from the discussions.

- ***How are American urban schools serving (and not serving) their students and communities?***
- ***What are the current public policy issues impacting urban schools, students, and communities?***
- ***How do poverty and accompanying factors affect the culture and achievement of urban schools?***
- ***How have urban schools and school systems historically changed and adapted?***
- ***What is the current and ideal culture of the urban school?***
- ***What options exist for families in the urban context?***
- ***How do we see innovation and effectiveness in actual Houston school settings?***
- ***What qualities are required today to foster a great school or classroom?***
- ***Who is served by today's schools, and what are the unique needs of those populations?***
- ***How are schools effectively led?***
- ***What challenges will urban schools and school systems face in the future?***

## STANDARDS AND COMPETENCIES

| ***Texas Education Agency***<br>***Pedagogy & Professional Responsibilities***<br>***Standards for Educator Certification (EC-Grade 12)*** |
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| *Standard I*<br>The teacher designs instruction appropriate for all students that reflects an understanding of relevant content and is based on continuous and appropriate assessment.<br>*Standard II*<br>The teacher creates a classroom environment of respect and rapport that fosters a positive climate for learning, equity, and excellence.<br>*Standard III*<br>The teacher promotes student learning by providing responsive instruction that makes use of effective communication techniques, instructional strategies that actively engage students in the learning process, and timely, high-quality feedback.<br>*Standard IV*<br>The teacher fulfills professional roles and responsibilities and adheres to legal and ethical requirements of the profession. |

## REQUIRED COURSE MATERIALS

Throughout the fifteen weeks, you will be expected to read and reflect on specific sections of the course texts. Please ensure you have continuous access to the texts throughout the course. (ALL books will be available on reserve at Fondren Library and can easily be purchased online.)

| ***TEXT*** | ***AVAILABILITY*** |
|---|---|
| ***Fighting to Save Our Urban Schools – and Winning!: Lessons From Houston***<br>*McAdams, 2000: Teachers College Press.*<br>*ISBN - 0807738840* | ***The Shame of the Nation***<br>*Kozol, 2006: Broadway Books.*<br>*ISBN - 1400052459* |
| ***Education Myths***<br>*Greene, 2005: Rowman & Littlefield*<br>*ISBN - 0742549771* | ***The World We Created at Hamilton High***<br>*Grant, 1988: Harvard University Press*<br>*ISBN - 0674962001* |
| ***The One Best System***<br>*Tyack, 1974, Harvard University Press.*<br>*ISBN – 0674637828* | |

In addition, your understanding of the concepts outlined in the texts will be supplemented by your analysis of specific articles and case studies. Each of the relevant case documents can either be downloaded directly or will be distributed in class.

## COURSE FORMAT

I have designed this class to foster maximum opportunities for involvement and engagement for each of you. We will focus a significant amount of each class session on discussion of key concepts. YOUR PARTICIPATION IS BOTH VALUED AND EXPECTED! In addition, certain sessions will integrate guest speakers, video reflection, simulation activities, and group interaction.

I pride myself on being accessible to my students whenever I am needed. Thus you should always feel free to raise questions or discuss the material. As future stewards of your own classroom culture, I know you will appreciate the importance of maintaining an environment in which we are supportive of each other's contributions and ideas.

## GRADING POLICIES/PROCEDURES

Throughout these fifteen weeks, you will have multiple opportunities to demonstrate your mastery of the course concepts. The ultimate grade you earn will be based on these products. I have no hidden agenda in relation to grades, and am eager for all students to receive the highest grades possible provided they meet these basic requirements. ☺

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| 4 ANALYSIS ASSIGNMENTS | 20 points |
| 4 DISCUSSION GROUP SUBMISSIONS | 20 points |
| 1 RESEARCH PAPER & PRESENTATION | 20 points |
| MID-TERM ANAYSIS | 20 points |
| FINAL EXAMINATION | 20 points |

The style required for papers is that of the American Psychological Association (APA).

| GRADE | GRADE POINTS | NUMERIC RANGE |
|---|---|---|
| A+ | 4.33 | 97-100 |
| A | 4.0 | 93-96 |
| A- | 3.66 | 90-92 |
| B+ | 3.33 | 87-89 |
| B | 3.0 | 83-86 |
| B- | 2.66 | 80-82 |
| C+ | 2.33 | 77-79 |
| C | 2.0 | 73-76 |
| C- | 1.66 | 70-72 |
| D+ | 1.33 | 67-69 |
| D | 1.0 | 63-66 |
| D- | 0.66 | 60-62 |
| F | 0.0 | Below 60 |

## COURSE SCHEDULE

Over the course of the semester, we will delve deeply into multiple facets of the issues impacting schools, students, educators, and communities. Though the outline below offers you a road map for what we will cover, we may alter it slightly based on our ongoing progress. In addition, I reserve the right to add or remove readings based on the needs of the group. The tentative schedule is as follows:

| Week | Date | Discussion Topics | Following this class, you should … |
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| **1** | Thurs., Jan. 16th | Introduction to the Urban Education Context<br><br>What are the big questions impacting urban students, schools, and communities? | Read the following texts: (available on OwlSpace)<br>• "*A Nation at Risk"*<br>• *"Goals 2000"*<br>• *"Should America Be More Like Them?"*<br>• *"Too Little Too Late"*<br>• *"How The World's Best Performing School Systems Come Out On Top"*<br><br>By January 21st, submit a two-page reflection justifying whether the findings outlined in "A Nation At Risk" and "Goals 2000" in retrospect seem appropriate, overly aspirational, or not ambitious enough AND explain why.<br><br>***By January 22nd, respond to the online "school placement" survey.*** |
| **2** | Thurs., Jan. 23rd | How are we performing as a nation?<br><br>What is the current state of education in America?<br><br>How does that national context affect schools and students on the local level? | Read selected excerpts of the following texts: (available on OwlSpace)<br>• *Children at Risk*<br>• *Houston Area Survey*<br><br>Watch *Dropout Nation.* (available on OwlSpace)<br><br>By January 28th, submit a two-page reflection describing what you feel are the most pressing issues for Houston's kids. |

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| **3** | Thurs., Jan. 30th | Within the fourth largest city in America, how are our schools performing?<br><br>How do those results impact Houston's residents and communities as a whole?<br><br>*GUEST SPEAKER:*<br>*Dr. Bob Sanborn* | Read the following texts:<br><br>• Kozol<br>• *"What No School Can Do"* (available on OwlSpace)<br>• *"American Schooling & Educational Inequality: A Forecast for the 21st Century"* (available on OwlSpace)<br><br>By February 4th, respond to the online discussion prompts. |
| ***February 6 & 7*** | | ***Class Observations at Bellaire High School*** | |
| **4** | Thurs., Feb. 6th (5:30 start time) | How does the urban context affect students' experience in public schools?<br><br>What is the relationship between poverty and the urban context?<br><br>"Waiting For Superman" | Read McAdams and HISD overview documents. (available on OwlSpace)<br><br>By February 11th, respond to the online discussion prompts. |
| **5** | Thurs., Feb. 13th | ***H.I.S.D. Board Meeting – 5:00 p.m.*** | Read the following texts:<br><br><u>(distributed in class)</u><br>• *"At-Risk Youth"*<br>• *"Affirming Diversity"*<br><br><u>(available on OwlSpace)</u><br>• *"Special Education Overview*<br>• *"Bilingual/ ESL Overview*<br>• *Brown v. Board of Education*<br>• *"State of Gifted Education in Texas"*<br><br>By February 18th, submit a two-page reflection sharing your observations on how you have seen the needs of specialized student populations served (or not served) in the course of your school observations. |

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| **6** | Thurs., Feb. 20th | How can and should schools serve the unique needs of diverse learners?<br><br>• Limited English Proficiency Students<br>• Special Education Students<br>• Gifted & Talented Students<br>• Learners From Varied Cultural Backgrounds<br>• At-Risk Youth<br><br>What are the implications of these student populations on teachers, schools, and school systems? | Read Grant and Tyack. |
| ***Tues., February 25th*** | | ***"Life in Schools" 6:00 p.m.-8:00 p.m.*** | |
| **7** | Thurs., Feb. 27th | How have the structure and focus of schools historically changed?<br><br>What subsequent impacts have those changes exerted on student achievement? | Make sure you have completed at least 5 of your school observation hours! |
| **8** | Thurs., Mar. 6th | **SPRING BREAK** | |
| ***SUBMIT YOUR MIDTERM SCHOOL OBSERVATION PAPER BY TUES., MARCH 11TH*** | | | |
| **9** | Thurs., Mar. 13th | As I continue my interactions in urban schools, how should I measure quality?<br><br>What does great teaching look like?<br><br>What does effective school culture look like? | Watch the following videos: (available on OwlSpace)<br><br>• *Kopp and Ravitch: What Does Real Reform Require?*<br><br>• *"The N.Y. Charter School Debate"*<br><br>Read the following texts: (available on OwlSpace)<br><br>Read selected excerpts of the following text (available on OwlSpace):<br><br>• *"Rhetoric Versus Reality: What We Know and What We Need to Know About Vouchers and Charter Schools"* |

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| | | | By March 18th, respond to the online discussion prompts. |
| **10** | Thurs., Mar. 20th | What does large-scale educational reform look like in the urban context?<br><br>Do urban students and communities require different solutions than traditional schools and districts have offered?<br><br>*GUEST SPEAKERS* | Read the following texts:<br>• Greene<br>• *"What No School Can Do"* (available on OwlSpace<br><br>By March 25th, submit a two-page reflection responding to the following prompt:<br><br>The question of 'Does money matter?' gets thrown around frequently in the education arena. Based on your experiences within urban schools, under what circumstances are financial resources the determinant of the success or failure of the school/student? When are factors other than money the key to transforming the educational experiences of students? |
| **11** | Thurs., Mar. 27th | How can the performance of urban schools be improved?<br><br>What elements are most important?<br>• Financial Resources<br>• Human Capital<br>• Community Transformation<br>• Leadership<br><br>*GUEST SPEAKERS* | Read the following texts:<br>• *"The Nine Characteristics of High-Performing Schools"* (available on OwlSpace)<br>• *"Seven Strong Claims About Successful School Leadership"* (available on OwlSpace)<br><br>Following your reading of the aforementioned texts, respond to the online discussion prompts by Tues., April 8th. |
| **12** | Thurs., Apr. 4th | **MIDTERM RECESS** | |

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| **13** | Thurs., Apr. 11th | What does urban school reform look like?<br><br>What examples from within Houston and across the nation should we look to in determining how to improve urban schools?<br><br>What are the unique needs of elementary, middle, and high school students, and how should schools account for those needs? | |
| ***SUBMIT SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PROPOSAL PAPERS BY WED., APRIL 17TH AT 6 P.M.*** | | | |
| **14** | Thurs., Apr. 18th | School Improvement Plan Presentations [Group 1] | Group 1 members should post introductory questions on the discussion board no later than Sunday, April 14th<br><br>Group 2 members should respond to the introductory questions on the discussion board no later than Tuesday, April 16th. |
| **15** | Thurs., Apr. 25th | School Improvement Plan Presentations [Group 2] | Group 2 members should post introductory questions on the discussion board no later than Sunday, April 21st.<br><br>Group 1 members should respond to the introductory questions on the discussion board no later than Tuesday, April 23rd. |
| ***GRADUATING SENIORS: SUBMIT FINAL EXAM BY MON., MAY 5TH AT 6 P.M.***<br>***ALL OTHER STUDENTS: SUBMIT FINAL EXAM BY MON., MAY 12TH AT 6 P.M.*** | | | |

## ASSIGNMENT GUIDELINES

*REFLECTION ASSIGNMENTS*

Reflection assignments offer me the opportunity to witness your application of key course concepts. These essays should be written in academic language, though I understand if certain topics tend to lend themselves more to a first-person narrative. APA formatting should be used for citations.

Reflections should be a MINIMUM of two pages in Times New Roman 12-pt. font. If you choose to write more than that, I'll be pleased. I'll be even happier if I see you using your reflections to begin formulating questions for the upcoming class discussion.

Each reflection essay is worth 5 points.

*DISCUSSION BOARD SUBMISSIONS*

On weeks when you are not expected to prepare a reflection assignment, you will be asked to contribute to an online discussion forum focusing on key questions for the upcoming week's session. *It is your responsibility to check the discussion board on a weekly basis for updates or additional submissions.*

My criteria for grading your submissions is simply whether you contributed meaningful insights to the discussion, rather than basing it on an arbitrary number of posts. It is in your best interests, however, to contribute frequently to the online discussions.

Each week's discussion board submissions are worth 5 points.

*MIDTERM & FINAL EXAMS*

In lieu of a traditional final exam, you will be asked to submit a "mid-semester school observation synopsis" summarizing your findings and reactions. The paper should be a minimum of 6 pages. You will receive explicit guidance on the desired content and structure for the paper in advance of its submission.

Your final exam will consist of an essay question that asks you to synthesize the observations, readings, class discussions, and supplemental activities throughout the semester.

Each of these exams will be worth 20 points.

*IN-SCHOOL OBSERVATION*

Finally, you will be expected to complete at least ten hours of observation in a Houston-area middle or high school. We will be using the insights you draw from these experiences in our discussions.

I will share specific information with you on local campuses for which Rice has already negotiated access. You will be expected to log your observation hours, which you will submit at the end of the semester.

Please let me know if you expect any logistical challenges or require assistance in arranging access to an additional campus.

I reserve the right to deduct up to 10 points from any student who has not completed observations.

## SHARING YOUR WORK

A major rationale for the design of this course is to foster an even broader sharing of your knowledge and expertise among your classmates. For that reason, many of the assignments have been designed to serve not only as a valuable learning experience for yourself but also as a catalyst for group dialogue (e.g. analyses, reflection essays). I deeply value and appreciate your continued commitment to sharing your work with your peers, and will ask that you also show this same appreciation and respect to others as they too share their insights with you. You may also rest assured that any grades accrued on these assignments will remain strictly confidential.

## STUDENT ACCOMMODATIONS

Students who have special needs addressed by the Americans with Disabilities Act who need any test or course material accommodations should feel free to request assistance through Rice's Disability Support Services at (713) 348-5841 or at adarice@rice.edu.

## ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

The university system is based on a respect of intellectual property. Citing sources of information used in one's work and total reliance on personal ability in individual assessments are fundamentals in scholarly behavior. Breaches in academic integrity will be documented and reported to the Honor Council. The instructor has the right to fail the student for the specific project or for the entire course.

## LATE ASSIGNMENTS

It is the instructor's policy that late assignments will not be accepted. Exceptions to this policy are only allowed due to individual extenuating circumstances and will be at the discretion of the instructor to accept a late assignment and to make appropriate point deductions for lateness.

## ATTENDANCE

Attainment of the objectives of this course is directly related to the developmental sequences of experiences from one class meeting to another; thus, frequent absences from class makes it unlikely that a grade of A could be earned. Students will be expected to attend all classes and be punctual. If you come late because of traffic or other reasons, please come in and make sure you get the handout/s, activities, etc.

As busy individuals, there may be a time when you cannot be in class. In this case, please let the instructor know in advance. **One class may be missed for a valid reason with permission**. You are responsible for the content and assignments that are missed.

## INCOMPLETE GRADES

Often, students enter a course thinking that they can take an "Incomplete" (INC) grade if they decide they will not complete the course requirements on time. Please keep in mind that students will not be allowed to take a grade of INC in this course due to poor planning on their part.

As your instructor, I am required to report this designation to the Office of the Registrar when a student fails to complete a course because of verified illness or other circumstances beyond the student's control that occur during the semester. If you find you do have a legitimate reason for the INC grade, please talk to me as soon as possible to discuss the situation and to identify the documentation that will be required to support your request. For additional information please refer to http://registrar.rice.edu/facstaff/grade_info/.

## INTEGRATION OF TECHNOLOGY

All students will be expected to be proficient with a word processing system and using internet for literature review searches. In addition, all students are required to:
(1) communicate by email
(2) complete assignments using a word processing program
(3) submit assignments to the instructor by email
(4) use the library's electronic databases for literature reviews
(5) utilize a class discussion board for ongoing questions, discussions and student concerns.

***Thank you for all that you will do for Houston's kids, and for committing to advancing your own professional skills through your education studies! I look forward to a great semester!***